

RETAIL PRICES - SEPTEMBER QUARTER, 1955.

The "C" Series Index Numbers.

Index numbers of retail prices ("C" Series) for the September quarter of 1955 (with the weighted average of the six capital cities in 1925-1927 as base of 1,000) were as shown below.

"C" Series Retail Price Index Numbers and Percentage Increases^a,
September Quarter, 1955.

City.	Index Number.	Increase from Year Ended June, 1939.	Increase from September Quarter, 1954.	Increase from June Quarter, 1955.
		%	%	%
Brisbane ..	2,221	157.4	3.3	0.7
Toowoomba ..	2,251	164.5	3.6	0.2
Rockhampton ..	2,259	162.4	3.1	0.4
Townsville ..	2,325	154.9	2.4	-0.2
Bundaberg ..	2,202	161.8	2.7	0.1
Warwick ..	2,223	170.4	2.5	0.5

a Minus (-) indicates decrease.

The "C" Series index number for Brisbane recorded a rise of 0.7 per cent. in the September quarter of 1955. This was a little greater than the rise in the June quarter (0.5 per cent.), but less than the rises in the two preceding quarters. Since the steep price increases suddenly ceased about the middle of 1952, there have been small rises in some quarters and small decreases in others, but the general trend has been upward at an average rate of 0.6 per cent. per quarter. The latest increase was still approximately in line with this trend. Since the end of 1952, clothing and footwear prices have remained practically unchanged, while food and groceries and miscellaneous items have shown slight upward trends, the former, however, showing more irregularity in their upward movement owing chiefly to seasonal fluctuations in some items.

In the latest quarter, the rises in four of the other cities for which the index numbers are calculated were less than in Brisbane, and in Townsville there was a small decrease. Food and groceries increased in Toowoomba, Rockhampton, Bundaberg, and Warwick (but by less than their 1.4 per cent. rise in Brisbane) and fell by 0.3 per cent. in Townsville. Clothing and footwear fell slightly in all six cities, and miscellaneous items rose in all cities, the largest rise being in Rockhampton where gas became dearer.

In spite of their practically steady level during the past three years, clothing and footwear prices were in 1955 still much higher than those of other sections of the index compared with their pre-war levels. In all cities, clothing and footwear prices were about $3\frac{3}{4}$ times as high as in 1938-39, whereas food and grocery prices were barely 3 times as high, and prices of miscellaneous items had only slightly more than doubled. Particulars are given in the next table.

Retail Prices, Percentage Increases^a, September Quarter, 1955.

City.	Food and Groceries.		Clothing and Footwear.		Miscellaneous Items.	
	From Year Ended June, 1939.	From June Quarter, 1955.	From Year Ended June, 1939.	From June Quarter, 1955.	From Year Ended June, 1939.	From June Quarter, 1955.
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Brisbane ..	198.2	1.4	279.1	-0.2	111.9	0.8
Toowoomba ..	220.6	0.4	275.2	-0.4	110.1	0.7
Rockhampton ..	189.7	0.0	272.9	-0.4	122.2	1.3
Townsville ..	181.8	-0.3	277.0	-0.5	121.2	0.3
Bundaberg ..	189.1	0.1	272.8	-0.2	107.4	0.7
Warwick ..	211.0	0.8	280.4	-0.1	115.8	0.8

a Minus (-) indicates decrease.

Food and Groceries.

As shown in the preceding table, small increases were recorded during the quarter in food and grocery index numbers for the six cities in which data are collected except in Townsville, which again showed a slight decrease. Increases were recorded for the six cities by varying amounts in prices of potatoes, butter, cheese, bacon, mutton, pork (except in Townsville where prices were unchanged), and onions (except in Toowoomba where a very slight decrease was recorded). These increases were partly offset by decreases for the six cities in the prices of tea, eggs, and beef.

Clothing and Miscellaneous.

Small decreases were recorded in the clothing and footwear index numbers for each of the six cities during the quarter. The miscellaneous items index numbers showed slight increases in the six cities, the main cause of this being increased prices for tobacco while gas prices also increased in Rockhampton.

Rent (4 and 5 Roomed Houses).

The rent index increased slightly in Brisbane (0.7 per cent.) and Rockhampton (2.2 per cent.) but remained stationary in the other four cities.

Comparison of Costs in Queensland Cities.

The following table shows the amounts, for the various Queensland cities, required in September quarter, 1955, to purchase the quantity of goods or housing which would have cost £1 in Brisbane.

Amounts Required in Various Cities to Purchase Equivalent of £1 in Brisbane.

City.	All Groups.			Food and Groceries.			Rent (4 and 5 Rooms).			Clothing and Footwear.			Miscellaneous Items.		
	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.
Brisbane ..	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0
Toowoomba ..	1	0	3 $\frac{1}{4}$	1	0	5 $\frac{1}{4}$	1	0	7 $\frac{1}{2}$		19	9 $\frac{1}{2}$	1	0	6
Rockhampton	1	0	4	1	0	3 $\frac{3}{4}$		19	8 $\frac{1}{2}$	1	0	0 $\frac{1}{2}$	1	1	4
Townsville	1	0	11 $\frac{1}{4}$	1	1	1	1	1	1 $\frac{3}{4}$	1	0	1 $\frac{3}{4}$	1	1	10 $\frac{3}{4}$
Bundaberg ..		19	10	1	0	5 $\frac{1}{2}$		16	3 $\frac{1}{2}$		19	10 $\frac{3}{4}$	1	0	4 $\frac{3}{4}$
Warwick ..	1	0	0 $\frac{1}{4}$	1	0	7 $\frac{1}{4}$		15	7 $\frac{1}{4}$		19	11 $\frac{1}{2}$	1	1	5 $\frac{1}{2}$

In relation to Brisbane, the prices of all groups together decreased during the quarter in the five provincial cities for which index numbers are calculated. The largest decrease in these relative prices (2 $\frac{1}{4}$ d. in the £) was recorded in Townsville and the smallest in Warwick ($\frac{1}{2}$ d. in the £). Townsville remained the dearest city of those included in the survey while Bundaberg was still the cheapest and the only city where retail prices were lower than in Brisbane, the amount required to purchase goods costing £1 in Brisbane being only 19s. 10d. compared with £1 0s. 11 $\frac{1}{4}$ d. in Townsville.

The relative prices of food and groceries in each of the five provincial cities remained higher than in Brisbane, although during September quarter the excess over Brisbane prices decreased by amounts ranging from 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ d. in the £ in Warwick to 4 $\frac{1}{4}$ d. in the £ in Townsville.

During the quarter relative prices of clothing and footwear decreased by $\frac{3}{4}$ d. in the £ in Townsville, $\frac{1}{2}$ d. in the £ in Rockhampton, $\frac{1}{4}$ d. in the £ in Toowoomba, and remained the same in Bundaberg and Warwick. Clothing and footwear prices are much more uniform throughout the State than prices of commodities in other sections of the index, and in the recent quarter the largest deviation from Brisbane prices was a saving of 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ d. in the £ in Toowoomba.

Miscellaneous items are more expensive in all five provincial cities than in Brisbane. The additional costs decreased during September quarter by $\frac{1}{4}$ d. in the £ in Bundaberg and 1 $\frac{1}{4}$ d. in the £ in Townsville, increased by 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ d. in the £ in Rockhampton, and remained unchanged in Toowoomba and Warwick.

Commonwealth and State Basic Wage Rates.

The Commonwealth Court of Conciliation and Arbitration suspended automatic ("cost of living") adjustments after the adjustment which operated from the beginning of the first pay-period in August, 1953.

In Queensland, the State Industrial Court, after the publication of the index numbers for the September and December quarters of 1953, increased the basic wage by 3s. for males and 2s. for females on each occasion. During the next six quarters, the "C" Series index number for Brisbane recorded four small upward movements and two small downward movements, and the Court made no adjustment in the basic wage until after the publication of the index number for the June quarter of 1955, when an increase of 2s. for males and 1s. 6d. for females was awarded. Similar increases followed the publication of the index numbers for the September quarter of 1955.

In New South Wales, South Australia, and Tasmania the State basic wages have not been varied from the rates fixed in August, 1953 (except for an increase of 10s. in Tasmania in November, 1953, which operated only for a few weeks until it was cancelled on 9th December, 1953). In Victoria, where wages are determined by Wages Boards, automatic adjustments have been continued under special legislation, an increase of 6s. in the latest quarter having brought the total net increase in the adult male rate for Melbourne to 11s. since August, 1953. In Western Australia, no adjustment was made to the basic wage from July, 1953, until August, 1955, when an increase of 5s. 11d. for males and 3s. 10d. for females was made in the adult rates for Perth.

Basic wage rates are under review in some States and the following table shows rates operating at 1st November, 1955.

Retail Prices and Basic Wage Rates.Australian Capital Cities.

Capital City.	Retail Price Index ("C" Series).			Commonwealth Basic Wage.			State Basic Wage.						
	June Quarter, 1953.	June Quarter, 1955.	Sept. Quarter, 1955.	Males. ^a			Males.			Females.			Date of Operation. ^b
				£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.	
Brisbane	2,115	2,206	2,221	10	18	0	11	9	0	7	14	0	24. 10. 55
Sydney ..	2,360	2,423	2,455	12	3	0	12	3	0	9	2	0	Aug., 1953
Melbourne	2,279	2,329	2,392	11	15	0	12	6	0	9	4	6	Nov., 1955c
Adelaide	2,238	2,352	2,366	11	11	0	11	11	0	8	13	0	Aug., 1953
Perth ..	2,290	2,569	2,561	11	16	0	12	12	5	8	4	1	9. 8. 55
Hobart ..	2,351	2,438	2,467	12	2	0	12	2	0	9	1	6	Aug., 1953c

a The female rates are 75 per cent. of the male rates.

b Where dates are not quoted wage rates operate from beginning of first pay-period in month shown.

c No State wage actually declared. The rate fixed by the Commonwealth Court was usually followed to a large extent until August, 1953. For subsequent adjustment see above.

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BRISBANE.

7th November, 1955.

Table 1 - The "C" Series Retail Prices Index.

(Base: Weighted Average of Six Capital Cities, 1923-1927 = 1,000.)

City.	Year Ended June, 1939.	Year Ended June, 1946.	Year Ended Sept., 1955.	Quarter Ended -				
				Sept., 1954.	Dec., 1954.	March, 1955.	June, 1955.	Sept., 1955.
Brisbane	863	1,079	2,200	2,150	2,178	2,195	2,206	2,221
Toowoomba	851	1,092	2,229	2,173	2,191	2,227	2,247	2,251
Rockhampton	861	1,084	2,237	2,191	2,198	2,238	2,251	2,259
Townsville	912	1,119	2,314	2,270	2,275	2,326	2,330	2,325
Bundaberg	841	1,059	2,188	2,144	2,161	2,188	2,200	2,202
Weighted Average								
Five Towns	864	1,082	2,212	2,162	2,186	2,209	2,220	2,233
Warwick	822	1,073	2,207	2,168	2,183	2,207	2,213	2,223

Table 2 - Food and Groceries Retail Prices Index.

(Base: Weighted Average of Six Capital Cities, 1923-1927 = 1,000.)

City.	Year Ended June, 1939.	Year Ended June, 1946.	Year Ended Sept., 1955.	Quarter Ended -				
				Sept., 1954.	Dec., 1954.	March, 1955.	June, 1955.	Sept., 1955.
Brisbane	856	971	2,507	2,404	2,456	2,502	2,518	2,553
Toowoomba	814	1,010	2,565	2,453	2,480	2,572	2,599	2,610
Rockhampton	895	1,012	2,568	2,504	2,498	2,590	2,592	2,593
Townsville	955	1,057	2,677	2,610	2,607	2,712	2,699	2,691
Bundaberg	903	1,027	2,589	2,495	2,530	2,606	2,609	2,611
Weighted Average								
Five Towns	864	984	2,529	2,431	2,473	2,530	2,544	2,570
Warwick	846	1,000	2,594	2,509	2,536	2,599	2,609	2,631

Table 3 - Clothing and Footwear Retail Prices Index.

(Base: Weighted Average of Six Capital Cities, 1923-1927 = 1,000.)

City.	Year Ended June, 1939.	Year Ended June, 1946.	Year Ended Sept., 1955.	Quarter Ended -				
				Sept., 1954.	Dec., 1954.	March, 1955.	June, 1955.	Sept., 1955.
Brisbane	829	1,454	3,140	3,109	3,135	3,133	3,150	3,143
Toowoomba	829	1,429	3,104	3,083	3,097	3,086	3,122	3,110
Rockhampton	845	1,477	3,139	3,093	3,116	3,127	3,163	3,151
Townsville	840	1,457	3,163	3,130	3,146	3,156	3,182	3,167
Bundaberg	839	1,447	3,115	3,081	3,100	3,098	3,133	3,128
Weighted Average								
Five Towns	831	1,454	3,139	3,107	3,131	3,130	3,151	3,143
Warwick	825	1,441	3,138	3,107	3,133	3,137	3,142	3,138